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Ministry of Forests and Range

PREVENT FOREST FIRES AROUND THE CAMPFIRE AND THE HOME

VICTORIA – Forests and Range Minister Rich Coleman is encouraging British Columbians to be fire safe this long weekend, both around the campfire and around the home.

Coleman said that by taking a few simple steps such as removing branches, needles, brush and other flammable materials, homeowners can help protect their homes.

"We all remember those images from the Kelowna fire of 2003, when some homes were left standing while others were completely destroyed," said Coleman. "By following a few of the simple suggestions in the FireSmart Homeowners Manual, you can reduce the risks to your home, as well as increase the safety of your family, neighbours and our first responders and firefighters."

Homes near or within forested areas are at increased risk from wildfires. If forest fires spread into developed areas, they may be beyond the capacity for local fire departments to control. For individual homeowners, the most effective means of reducing the risk of property damage is to eliminate flammable materials from around their homes.

The pamphlet, FireSmart Homeowners Manual, describes in detail what should be done to reduce the risks. Simple actions like keeping roofs and eavestroughs clear of debris can prevent wind-blown embers from starting fires on roofs. Another key element is creating a "priority zone" extending 10 metres (about 30 feet) away from the house, where all flammable shrubs, trees and deadfall should be removed. Other flammable materials such as wood piles and propane containers should also be moved well away from structures.

"It's our responsibility to use campfires safely. Keep them small and make sure they're out completely before you leave them," said Coleman. "We can take the same initiative to protect our homes. There is a lot that individual homeowners can – and are – doing to make a difference."

For a copy of the FireSmart Homeowners Manual, and the latest information on fire bans, restrictions, fire danger ratings and weather information, visit the protection program website: www.for.gov.bc.ca/protect/. For information about the safe disposal of yard waste, contact your municipality or regional district.

The public is reminded that its help is required to keep campfires safe and in reporting forest fires. Please report all grass and forest fires to 1-800-663-5555, or *5555 on the cellular network.

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